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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

THAILAND

(Situation Report as of 1630 EDT)

SUMMARY

1. The resignation of the Thanom government has not yet ended the fighting in Bangkok. Between two and three thousand rioters were continuing to attack government installations in the city on the evening of 14 October. The police, who have borne the brunt of the fighting, are acting with considerable restraint, but casualties nonetheless appear to be in the hundreds. Army units are moving into the capital to help restore order.

2. The new Prime Minister, Thammasat University rector Sanya Thammasak, has broadcast an appeal for an end to the fighting; he has promised a new constitution and election within six months. It is far from clear how much power Sanya will have. He has the support of the King, who has played a major role in the events of the past few days, but it is not clear how much power he will be accorded by the army commanders. Thanom and Praphat evidently are still holding their military positions, but troops who are now entering the city may strengthen the hand of Thanom's ambitious son, Colonel Narong, and the army commander-in-chief, General Krit.

State Dept. review completed

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3. The violence that precipitated the government's resignation still has not yet run its course. The great majority of the student protesters have dispersed but upwards of 3,000 rioters--a collection of technical and vocational students, laborers and hooligans--are still battling police units in downtown Bangkok. The rioters have looted gun shops in the city and are well-armed. Casualties appear to be mounting with unconfirmed reports of the death toll nearing 200. During the late evening hours Bangkok time police were ordered to evacuate the Metropolitan Police Headquarters in the face of a large rebel force who were prepared to storm the building with explosives and fire bombs. The police have been unable to vacate the building, however, and have called for army reinforcements.

4. The police have borne the brunt of the fighting, although some army and navy units have also seen action. Additional army units, including the elite 1st and eleventh regiments of the 1st Division, are moving into the capital.

5. At this point, it does not appear that the rioters are part of a well-organized conspiracy. They have presented no demands to the government, nor have they identified themselves as belonging to any political group. Some Thai Communist elements undoubtedly have attempted to take advantage of the situation and may have joined ranks with the rioters. There is still no evidence that the Communist Party of Thailand is playing a role, but the tenacity with which the rebels are attacking police units suggests that at least some of the more radical student elements have been planning for such an eventuality for quite some time. Leaders of the National Student Center, who led the initial demonstrations, are appealing to those still fighting to lay down their arms.

6. The US Embassy reports that there is no evidence of any American citizens being either wounded or killed, or otherwise involved in the situation. The embassy has advised all Americans to stay inside their homes. American schools have

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been closed. There have been no disturbances at any US installations upcountry, although there have been anti-government demonstrations in Udorn city.

Prime Minister Sanya

7. The King announced the appointment of Sanya Thammasak, the respected Rector of Thammasat University and member of the King's Privy Council, as the new prime minister. In a broadcast to the nation a few hours later Sanya promised that a new constitution will be promulgated and that an election for a new parliament will take place within six months. In discussing the formation of his cabinet, Prime Minister Sanya would only say that he will invite personalities who possess intelligence, virtue, ability and honesty. He gave no indication of whether the military will share power in his new cabinet.

8. The 66 year-old Sanya will be the first civilian to head a government in Thailand since 1948. He has a strong legal background, having served as Chief Justice of the Thai Supreme Court. Sanya is popular with the students--clearly a factor in his selection--and has been quietly critical of the Thanom government. He is reputedly pro-US and has said that a continuing US presence in Southeast Asia is necessary to keep Thailand free of Communist influence. The US Embassy expects that Sanya will support a continuation of the basic Thai foreign policy of the past two decades and that his appointment should spell no adverse affect on US interests in Thailand. Nevertheless Sanya's attitude toward the large US military presence remains an unknown factor. If he holds his job, Sanya may come under considerable domestic pressure--from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the press, prominent Thai citizens and the students--to seek a more rapid rate of withdrawal of US forces.

The Army

9. Clearly picked as a means to placate the students, Sanya may prove to be only an interim appointee. It is not yet clear, for example, where the army stands on his appointment. It may be that Sanya will be an acceptable figure-head, at least until the security situation is stabilized, and

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the military begins to turn its attention to the new political relationship within the ruling group.

10. The future of Field Marshals Thanom and Praphat is not yet clear. They are still holding their respective military posts of supreme commander and deputy supreme commander of the armed forces. Thanom, in fact, has issued several communiques in his capacity as supreme commander. Both men have clearly lost ground, but there is as yet no evidence that potential rivals are taking advantage of the situation to push them aside. Among the leading contenders are Thanom's son, Colonel Narong, and army commander-in-chief Krit Sivara. Some of the rioters have made anti-Narong statements, but there are also reports that some of Narong's military supporters played a role in the early demonstrations. Narong's capacity for maneuver will also be increased by the fact that troops of his 11th Regiment are moving into the city.

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